

The Emperor's Knight

by CII

Category: Halo, Mass Effect

Genre: Sci-Fi

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2013-01-12 18:44:54

Updated: 2013-01-12 18:44:54

Packaged: 2016-04-27 03:57:59

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 12,252

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: A companion piece to BDM's Mass Effect II story. Kiryuu Knight ponders over the what Shepard had discovered in the Collector's Base. Upon this, he makes his own discovery, one that may turn the tide against the Reapers.

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Kiryuu Knight scanned over the many files sent to him by his favorite runner, Alan Tyler. Cerberus' own dealings have been more problematic than usual. Even more so, was the information that he had gathered from an inside source upon the Normandy II. Disturbing and troubling findings of what plans the Illusive Man had next in his game. Shepard and her crew were at the Collector base, discovering some horrifying truths behind the Collectors and who they worked for. King Ghidorah, the demonic presence from another reality, another existence, who's purpose seems to be to absorb the minds, wills, and knowledge of all living beings, and the Illusive Man wants to use King Ghidorah against himself.

Only this plan had been played out before. This plan was the plan of the Forerunners when they created the virus known as the Flood. They planned to use the stolen technology from the Precursors as a means to prove themselves worthy of becoming the galaxy's new guardians by ridding the galaxy of King Ghidorah for good. Only, their plan failed and it cost them and the galaxy many lives because of their idle foolery.

Now, the Illusive Man has the same plans. Kiryuu was running out of options and running out of time. So many problems that came to him, so much weight upon his shoulders now than ever. He thought he had loosened his troubles when he left the Citadel, left the Council to its own idiocy, but now a whole new set of troubles smacked him in the face. Kiryuu leaned back in the massive office of wood, steel, and mirror-like glass. One of the few places where he could feel like

he was at peace, when he was in his true size. Being on the Citadel for five years, trapped in a smaller form for all those years, he felt so confined. It was good to be back where he belonged, with the company he cared about.

Kiryuu rapped an armored, metallic, silvery talon upon the mahogany wooden finish. He need not worry about scratching it, it was coated with a durable polymer that protected it from any accidental scrapes his claws would make as he shuffled hard copies and tapped upon the touch screen keyboard. All around him, floating in a slowing orbit were trideo screens coming showing the news across the globe and the galaxy, stocks, and of course some distracting entertainment. He always like some distracting entertainment to cool his circuits. Comedy flashed on the screen, some old cartoons from the 1980s, and a soap opera from the mid 2200s. He had a long catalog of various shows he had stored in drives. Used to, he would store them inside of himself, but now he needed the space for other important documents.

He looked to the files again, the information of what King Ghidorah was doing and what the Illusive Man now wants to do only filled his CPU with terror.

"That bastard will be the end of all of us," Kiryuu said in a disdainful, low whisper.

His head lifted forward when he heard the sound of the door opening at the end of his desk. His desk connected to the doorway to his office, the doorway humanoids used. It allowed them to walk onto the desk and chat with him. All humans and metahumans looked like little dolls when they stood upon his desk, but of course he knew the difference. Even a Great Dragon could sit upon his desk if they bent forward. He recalled fond memories when Dunkelzahn used to do just that, or Malcho. Lofwyr never really visited Kiryuu inside his office, but he did entertain Dunkelzahn and Malcho quite well. Great Dragons looked like little children compared to Kiryuu's much superior size. He could hold one up easily upon his shoulder.

As the door opened up, he saw a Troll walk in. She was rather lovely for a Troll, her face perfect for a modeling agency, nice curves, and long flowing black hair, her skin the color of butterscotch. Then, there were the curved, ram-like horns upon her head and the pointed ears peaking out from under her hair. Female Trolls were often much more pleasing to the eye than their male counterparts. A pair of striking violet eyes looked to Kiryuu and he nodded to her. Kiryuu was always known to employ metahumans in his company, keeping with the tradition Dunkelzahn set up during 2050. Metahumans still had some difficulties finding equality, even after 500 years of the Awakening of the Sixth World. Mana had no end of letting up any time soon. Kiryuu and many others kept monitoring the steady rise. Malcho stated that possibly within the next two centuries, Mana will finally plateau, and then another couple of centuries, will start its steady decline. Then, after Mana reaches its lowest point again, the Seventh World will begin. And then, with the rise in Mana again, the Eighth World would be next, bringing back the likes of Lofwyr, Hestaby, Ghostwalker, Harlequin, and many others. But this time, Kiryuu will make sure no one forgets the Sixth World, unlike what happened after the Fourth World. And Malcho intended on staying way for the Seventh as he did the Fifth, hoping to keep his companion Kiryuu right along with him. Though Kiryuu mused the idea of surviving that long, he

wondered if he could truly do what a Great Dragon does, just keep existing even after everyone else has not. If he finally ends King Ghidorah's existence, what else would there be for him? Malcho has never seen an end of things to do, perhaps Kiryuu could do the same, find something else to focus on, something else to keep him going.

"Mr. Knight?" the Troll began.

"Miss Hermione," said Kiryuu. There were times where that name brought a smile to him as he thought about those old fantasy books written by one particular British author about a secret magical world hidden from the mortal world. He has the entire works stored in his database as well for once more amusement. All works of literary achievement needed to be stored, Kiryuu surmised. And perhaps that will be his next hobby, storing literary works from all over the galaxy. That could take up many centuries of his time. Though, someone has to do it.

"Did you want to see me?" Kiryuu asked.

"Yes, sir," she said. "I have the reports from Soñador Malcho and his project. I figured you would want to look them over."

"I would," said Kiryuu. "Thank you."

She raised an arm and a holographic gauntlet flashed over her forearm. The omni-tool beeped and chimed as she tapped across the photonic screen. Kiryuu looked to one of the trideo screens above and saw the data being transferred, lines of words flashing across the interface. Once the download was done, the Troll lowered her arm and bowed.

"I shall look over these in a moment," said Kiryuu. "You haven't heard any word from Malcho, have you?"

"No, sir," she replied. "Aside from the reports on his progress, nothing else."

Kiryuu sighed in disappointment: "He has been keeping to himself lately. Most troubling." With a wave of his silvery claw, he finally dismissed her.

Hermione bowed again and walked back down towards the door, the sounds of her pumps clacking upon the floor. Another reason why Kiryuu had the polymer on his nice desk, high heel shoes were just as bad as metallic claws.

Kiryuu looked to the reports again. The project Malcho started two years ago was going quite well. This project was to design a specialized ship that did not require Eezo or the usage of Lofwyr's Shaw-Fujikawa Slip-space Drive. No, this ship was something that would use Technomancy as its power. A ship built similar to the ships Earth had a few hundred years ago during the Technomancy Wars. Such technology of this level was forbidden out of fear of ill use, but in these dark times, Kiryuu believed it was needed. Kiryuu allowed Malcho to use samples of his biosyn-tech to help in the creation of the ship because of the Life Force crystal shards embedded in their matrix. But then there was another project that Malcho was working on, which he did not inform Kiryuu much on. Aside from the ship,

Malcho was up to something else. Ever since Kiryuu's time on the Citadel and Malcho finally regaining his memories, he had been busy with something he was not willing to let the biomecha on about. Kiryuu was curious and he made many attempts to pry into Malcho's databases. However, he was blocked. Usually prying into databases was easy for him, he could slide in and slide out with none the wiser, but Malcho set up something, a firewall Kiryuu could not break. Either Malcho had finally figured out much of Kiryuu's hacking tricks, or he finally gave into his pride and borrowed the Great Western Dragon Hestaby's cyberotaku€"or, it was something else that blocked him.

So many questions he had to have answered. King Ghidorah, the trouble with the Illusive Man, and now Malcho's secrecy. Then, Kiryuu leaned back, folding his arms to his chest and thought of something said to him only but a day ago.

I completely understand, my friend. She can be frightening at times. But I assure you she means well. Open your mind up a bit more to the Array and you will find your answers.

Did he dare do it? Did he dare Connect to the Array after whatever that was he saw? Would she be there to greet him as she has done before? Kiryuu was frightened of King Ghidorah, but he knew at least what that monster was. This entity that lived in the Array, or rather _was_ the Array, he did not know what it was. A dragon, with five heads, each one a different color, red, blue, green, black, and white. There was some kindness in the blue glowing eyes of the dragon. Upon each of the dragon's heads were five triangular stripes. When a Technomancer Connected, his face bore a certain number of stripes, none at all was the lowest, the rookies, one was a mid level, two advanced level, and finally three, the Master level. Kiryuu had three, Malcho had three, so did Manda. And this Precursor he saw on Alan's ship, he too had three on his cheeks. But the dragon, she had five. Never has Kiryuu seen five. Kiryuu sighed, allowing himself to relax. Perhaps he should Connect, just this once after so long. He wondered if he could still do it, if he was out of practice. He closed his eyes and spoke the sequence that allowed him to Connect.

They were Greek letters, each one representing a position, a number, or rather what came first, what was the middle, and what came last. He never understood why he had to say it, but he did. Kiryuu felt the influx from the Array, the vast database opening up to him like a book, ready for him to read. His CPU tingled as he touched its vastness, there was no end, no beginning, just the Array. From what he could perceive, it looked like the many Life Force crystals that Technomancy Towers were made of, each one containing some sort of encoded message. And it was everywhere. The cyan, ghostly cords flowed out from just the bottom of Kiryuu's skull, reaching out to attach themselves to the Array. Appearing upon his slate gray cheeks were the black, triangular stripes, three in all. Kiryuu opened his eyes, his golden orbs now shined blue white like his cords.

"Why don't you ask him?"

The Array replied just before Kiryuu was able to plug it his question. Kiryuu looked out upon the Array and it suddenly pulled away to reveal an enormous glowing, blue-white eye, much similar to his own. A crimson scaly snout followed, crowned with horns upon its

cheeks and a pair of beaked jaws. Two huge, black-tipped, curled horns jutted out from its head, sweeping backwards. A tall, purple frill swept down its long, ruby neck, striped with tiger stripes. And upon its lower jaw were five black, triangular stripes. Colors of red, blue, black, green, and white streaked down its vast body and a pair of great, black wings spread wide in the starry spans Kiryuu floated in. He once more beheld that dragon, but this time, she did not have five heads, only a single head, the red head. Still, the other colors were there.

"Ask him."

"Ask him," said Kiryuu. "I suppose I'm better off discovering on my own."

"Exactly."

He felt his mind return to him as he opened his eyes to find himself in his office one more time. That time seeing the Array for what it was, did not bother him as much as he thought. Still the underlying curiosity of what exactly he was looking at still plucked at the very recesses of his CPU. Kiryuu felt the coolness of the disconnection wash over his mind, the cords fading, the markings disappearing, and his eyes returning to their golden color.

Kiryuu finally brought himself the courage to dial up, Malcho's number. He wanted answers from the Great Dragon himself, not memos from his errand-boys. A trideo screen floated down just as Malcho's number was dialed. Immediately, his secretary had answered the phone, a lovely Elf with sand dollar blond hair.

"Mr. Knight?" she asked.

"Is Malcho there?" Kiryuu asked.

"Uh, yes, sir," she replied. "One moment, I'll see if he available."

Kiryuu waited for a few moments just as the screen then turned dark. Another minute later, and he saw Malcho standing in front of the screen, in his human form. The Great Feathered Serpent smiled pleasantly, his silky black, shoulder length hair, flopped forward as he dipped his head. He stood in a great warehouse and the sounds of building could be heard, crashing, clanking, the machinations of industry filling the speakers.

"Kiryuu," he said. "I am sorry I have not called you much lately. I have been rather busy."

"Yes, I am aware. How goes the project? Is the ship finished yet? Will we be able to take it out for a test drive yet?"

"Uh, the ship is not quite finished," replied Malcho. "I am afraid I have been rather distracted lately, amigo. Didn't you receive my report?"

"I did," said Kiryuu.

Malcho looked off screen to his right as a blue white flash lit up his face. Kiryuu suspected it was from a welder.

"I am very busy, Kiryuu," he said as he returned his attention to the screen. "I am sorry. Did you need anything?"

"I want to know what you are doing," said Kiryuu. "We have to prepare for the Reapers. That ship needs to be ready! A whole fleet of them need to be ready if we even hope to be free of eezo. I need progress."

"You are starting to sound an awfully lot like Lofwyr, Kiryuu," said Malcho. "I am trying to work as fast as I canâ€"

"If I have to go to Lofwyr to build these ships, then by God I will," said Kiryuu. "He would have them done by now! He would have a whole fleet of them done!"

Malcho's magenta eyes narrowed, a frown drew a taunt line across his face.

"Do not insult me, muchacho," he said, his tone becoming dangerously dark. "Especially with the prospect of pulling your contract out."

"Malcho," began Kiryuu. "I need progress made. I hear you building something back there, and I hope it is my ship!"

"Our ship," said Malcho. "And no, I am not building it today. I am doing something else."

"What could there be more important than this? Than finally putting an end to King Ghidorah?"

Malcho took in a deep breath: "You're obsessing again, Kiryuu. He's still quite a ways off."

"Tell me. What is more important than our project?"

The Great Feathered Serpent bowed his head, his eyes becoming downcast. He shook his head in refusal.

"I can't tell you."

Kiryuu's nose wrinkled and his eyes narrowed. He leaned back, scowling at his long time friend and teacher. As if by command or by his own emotion, his eyes glowed intensely blue, the three marking appearing upon both of his cheeks as the ghostly blue cords grew out long, trailing down his back from under his green dreadlocks. Kiryuu rose from his seat, his right hand opening up, forming a cyan blue ball of energy in its palm. He closed his hand into a fist and the ball squeezed out, forming a long sword, crackling with energy. He held up the sword to the screen, his eyes giving off their warning to Malcho.

"I'm coming down there," he said.

"Kiryuu," said Malcho. "Don't. Don't do this."

"I am sick and tired of being shoved off to the side for some pet project you've decided to take up!" Kiryuu said, his voice ending in a growl.

"Kiryuu, please. This isn't the time."

Kiryuu rose his left claw and snapped the fingers, vanishing instantaneously in a flash of blue-white light. The screen then grew dark.

Kiryuu found himself in a massive chamber of granite, the sounds of industry still going. The walls were lined with golden, metallic-like structures, sharp angles and perfect curves. Intricate designs lit up, providing light for the strange chamber. Carts floated, hovering with antigravity, carrying strange tools and supplies. The golden structures along the walls had some sort of strange, curly looking lettering that Kiryuu could not even identify as a language in his databanks. He knew many alien language, Sangheili, Turian, Asari—but this language was strange to him. The best thing he could identify was that it looked a little like Arabic, but that was as close as he could make out. He knew Arabic, spoke Arabic, but this language did not make sense to him. However, the size of the room, the size of the carts, they were all enormous, or rather, they all looked like they could be wielded by him in his true size. For a moment, Kiryuu thought he also shrank when he teleported to this chamber that Malcho was last seen in, but he did not remember activating his Mass Displacement ability.

"Sook sah shi ne gorath!"

Kiryuu turned, hearing the strange, alien, guttural language calling out to him. They came for him, these things that were a bit taller than he was, by from what he could calculate, 30 feet. They were dressed in steely colored, angular armor with long, heavy, cloaks and blue, glowing lights. Their helmed heads looked like that of a dragon with glowing, blue eyes. Brown manes, knotted into dreadlocks grew out from the backs of their heads. Each of them had a pair of golden horns, curved elegantly and slightly branched like the horns of an Eastern Dragon. Kiryuu could see tails covered in coppery-golden scales, lined with two rows of spines and tipped with twin spikes whipping out from under their cloaks. The weapons they held looked like decorated staves tipped with some sort of gold crystal.

"Y'sey sah gar'zar!" one at the front called, pointing an armored claw at him. The leader, Kiryuu surmised. Energy formed at the tips at their staves, firing out like several golden pulses, racing for Kiryuu. Rapidly they fired and Kiryuu ducked and dodged. He swung his sword and a pulse collided with the blade, and like a bat to a baseball, the sword sent the pulse bounding back towards his attackers. Another pulse slammed into the floor, exploding right in front of Kiryuu. The cybernetic dinosaur was sent flying back, scuttling across the floor the moment he smacked into it, sparks ignited as metal hit stone. He rose, keeping hold of the sword's energy. Kiryuu sensed another of these aliens appearing behind him in a golden flash and he swung his sword, only to be countered by a blade similar to his. Kiryuu's eyes lit up, staring at the blank, metallic, draconic face of his attacker. This creature was much taller than him and from what he could tell from the bulky armor, he was also rather heavily muscled with a barrel chest and strong arms. That is if this was a 'he'. The others approached, pointing their staves at Kiryuu, but the one with the sword lifted a hand.

"R'yur!" the voice sounded masculine. Perhaps he was a he. The alien

turned towards Kiryuu and backed off, but made no attempt at lowering his sword. He pointed at the cyberzombie, taking on a challenging stance. "Karu do ma'hu. G'gander yorathak."

"Excuse me?" Kiryuu asked. "I don't understand."

"Karu do ma'hu!" the alien barked and Kiryuu finally figured out what he wanted. He wanted a fight.

"Alright," said Kiryuu. "And I hope that if I beat you senseless, you'll tell me where Malcho is."

"Echeso," said the alien, giving a nod to Kiryuu. He tilted his head. This creature seemed to understand what Kiryuu said, but did not reply in kind.

Kiryuu and the alien collided, swords clashing and countering. Kiryuu swiftly swung, but each time he tried to make a wounding strike, he was countered. He punched with his left hand and the alien, in a swift blurry movement, dodged, reappearing behind him. The alien knocked Kiryuu to the floor.

"Eth," he said.

Kiryuu got to his feet like a flash, moved across the ground around his opponent. He knew his speed and he knew with that bulky armor the alien had, he could not hope to match Kiryuu's speed. Kiryuu swung again, but all he swung at was air. He felt something jab against his back and his body was suddenly launched into the air with blinding speed. The room became nothing more than a golden and gray blur as he was sent to the ceiling. Kiryuu growled and shook his head and as he neared the ceiling he righted himself, allowing his feet to break his landing. Kiryuu recoiled and leapt from the ceiling, teeth gritting. He let go of the sword, allowing the energy ball in his hand to swell in size. With a grunt, he sent the ball towards the alien, making his mark. The alien swung, curling his arms. His fingers sparked as he caught the ball, sending it back towards Kiryuu. The biomecha dodged in a vanishing blur and the ball collided with the angular ceiling. Rubble crumbled down from the impact crater it created and the golden lighting crashed loudly to the ground. The armored, alien workers stopped their work, and watched, startled by the sound.

Kiryuu reappeared right in front of the alien, swinging his right leg for a swift tornado kick to the alien's head. The alien ducked as Kiryuu kicked and then slammed his right fist into Kiryuu's stomach, once more sending him flying away. The biomecha landed and slid across the floor. He let loose a powerful roar, the roar only countered by Godzilla himself. Rising, Kiryuu grabbed hold of the metallic plates that kept his bony, crooked spines protected. The alien took on his defensive stance as Kiryuu's spines flickered, charging up with purple-white light. The guards around his opponent rounded him, ready to strike as Kiryuu opened his jaws up. He planted his armored feet to the ground. The alien held up his claw again.

"R'yur!" he called again, commanding them to stand back.

Kiryuu puffed out his chest as if he was about to take a breath and blasted forth the long stream of purple-white, heated energy from his mouth. The air sizzled with the blast, rippled from the heat. His

plasma struck true upon the alien, causing him to slide back from the force. But the alien did not fall to his knees, nor was he knocked off his feet. He held strong, holding the blast with his claws. Kiryuu stepped forward, still keeping with the beam. 500 years ago, prior to his learning of Technomancy, if Kiryuu ever attempted to keep up the plasma blast for so long, he would have drained his energy. But now, with the flow of the Array itself, he was able to continue firing. But this alien was not even going down, not even being vaporized by the blast. Kiryuu could not calculate the odds of this happening. He saw no fluctuation of an energy shield that the alien had on, his beam was making contact with it. But the alien was still alive. Kiryuu closed his mouth and watched with astonishment as the alien was able to gather the powerful energy of the plasma blast into his claws.

"Impossible!" Kiryuu called. "How did youâ€"

The alien chuckled a deep, mocking laugh and raised a single finger, wagging it at Kiryuu. Though he could not understand the language, Kiryuu knew what that meant. Kiryuu's brow raised, his eyes all cock-eyed at the spectacle. Then, the alien sent Kiryuu's own plasma blast right back at him. There was no way he could stop the blast, even his shields would overheat from the concussive power of his own breath weapon. Kiryuu Knight dodged the blast, tumbling just as the ball of purple-white energy spiraled passed him, exploding behind him on the far wall. Kiryuu was knocked back from the force, shielding his eyes as the blast smashed into the wall, creating a much larger crater. Black smoke rose up as debris fell.

"Teth," said the alien.

"What are you doing?" Kiryuu asked, rising to his feet again. "Keeping score?"

"Echeso," said the alien, nodding.

"Two points ahead of me?" Kiryuu asked. "Watch me catch up!"

Once more, the alien mocked him with his laughter. Kiryuu growled and leapt forward. He heard the whirl of his antigravity generators as they propelled him across the floor. Splintering out from the latex foam under his armor came silvery tendrils, each one ending in twisted looking blades. The blades whipped out and about, whistling as they slashed the air. They shot forth towards the alien, ready to slice and dice him. The alien moved around the blades with smooth agility. He was like liquid, weaving in and out of the blades. Not a single one of his biosyntech made contact with the alien. The alien turned and raised his armored claws. Out from the tips of his fingers came forks of golden lightning, popping and cracking, arching their way towards Kiryuu. The biomecha dodged the first bolt, but was then caught by the second. He froze, his body convulsing with each electrical charge. Then, the alien's body flashed golden and vanished in an electrical spark. Kiryuu felt as if time itself seemed to slow as the lightning zipped towards him. He felt the heated shock of the lightning and he roared out. It sizzled across his body before zapping out of him. Kiryuu toppled to the ground, feeling every servo in him fry. He landed face down, his limbs twitching. The biomecha curled up, twitching and writhing, grunting as he felt every biomechanical nerve freeze. All he could hear was the sound of thunder rolling through the vast chamber.

"N'heth," said the alien, walking up to him.

Kiryuu never felt so much pain coursing through him, all at once. His cybernetic optics were firing off in various colors, his vision blinded by static and wavy lines. His smell was greatly off, he thought the room began to smell like strawberries. The floor tasted like plums. Even his touch senses were insane, thinking the floor he touched was some sort of Swiss Cheese. Then, the alien's lightning came for him again and he twitched. His senses corrected, his sight cleared, his taste and smell finally gave him the correct input. The floor tasted like granite, as it should the air smelled like ozone, and his sight came back on line. He could move again and he slowly curled his body, his tail wiggling as he felt every sense come to life. Kiryuu heavily raised his head to the alien who then offered its claw to him.

"Get up," said the alien in rather perfect English with the accent that sounded a little Southwestern American. "I'm not gonna hurt you, get up."

"Kiryuu!" That voice he recognized, or rather it was not a voice, but a mental projection into his mind. _"Good God, Kiryuu!"_

Kiryuu grabbed hold of the alien's hand and he was then lifted up upon his feet. As he came to his feet, he saw galloping like a spider monkey across the floor, the lengthy, emerald green, feathered, serpentine form of Malcho. The Great Feathered Serpent rose up upon his broad, brilliantly colored wings. He raised a wing talon to his feathered mop mane, his face contorted in shock and worry.

"You stupid son of a bitch!" Malcho said. _"What the hell do you think you're doing here, puto?"_

"Er'gotha du morathaho," replied Kiryuu's victor.

"What?" Malcho asked. _"Tharathma w'teshi no ro shi g'gander ra!"_

"I know you speak English," said Kiryuu, his blue glowing eyes coming to the alien. "So speak English!"

"English it is, then," said the alien.

"Who and what are you?" Kiryuu asked. "Malcho, what the hell is going on here?"

"I am sorry, mi amigo," said Malcho. _"I was meaning to tell you, soon, about what I was working on. I am working on your ship, but I am working on many other things as well. This is one of them."_ He turned to the alien. _"You better take off your helm. And show him."_

The alien took in a deep breath and then lifted the helm off away from his face. Kiryuu's eyes widened and gasping. He felt himself disconnect, his cords disappearing, his eyes returning back to their golden color, and the black markings disappearing from his face. What he saw here, he knew very well. Here stood a creature with a head that looked like a strange mixture between an Eastern Dragon and a wolf. Long, coppery, fleshy tendrils grew out from the upper lip of

the creature. Furry, lupine ears twitched. Framing the creature's face were two crimson colored frills. The alien's front fringe was loose and straight while the long, light brown hair was bound in many dreadlocks decorated with golden beads and glowing, ornate ornaments. His eyes glowed blue with the three triangular markings on each of his cheeks, a symbol of his abilities with Technomancy. Kiryuu did see the ghostly, golden, cyan cords draping down the creature's back. Parting through slits in his heavy cloak were a pair of massive, ruby membraned, bat-like wings. A pair of white tusks grew out from his lower jaw, arching back like sabers. Though one distinct feature Kiryuu recognized about this alien was in his bangs were two bold stripes of silvery hair.

"Khan!" Kiryuu said, allowing the name escape his mouth in a shock.

"And now he insults me," said the alien, scowling at the name.

_"Kiryuu, you idiot!" _Malcho called. _"This isn't Khan! This is his nephew!"_

"Nephew?" Kiryuu asked. "Kedzuelâ€“Emperor Kedzuel?"

Kedzuel tilted his head, peering down to the much smaller Great Dragon.

"How did he know my name?" he asked.

_"I don't know," _Malcho replied.

"Megellan!" said Kiryuu. "Megellan! The Lengodo Dragonâ€“he mentioned you in when I spoke with Alan. You're an Electric Dragon. Blitzardi!"

"Blitzardi," said Kedzuel. "Electric Dragon is what the People used to call my particular race."

The guards removed their own helms, each one also Blitzardi with hair in varying shades of brown. Many of the other workers removed their helms as well and he saw Kethosians of other color shades, including Blitzardi workers. The other scale colors, he did not know the names of. Some were red-scaled with curved, ivory horns and lacking the tendrill mustaches, others were solid gold with manes of silver and silvery horns. He saw an all white Kethosian with rather short straight horns. He saw another green scaled one, another Lengodo like Megellan holding up a strange device. But each of them all had the blue eyes and black markings, some had one set, others two. The Blitzardi guards had two.

"Malcho, did I just jump a galaxy?" Kiryuu asked, looking around at the many Precursors.

_"No, amigo, you didn't," _Malcho replied. _"They came here."_

"Why?" Kiryuu asked. "I thought they couldn'tâ€“Megellan said they couldn't. They're stuck in Andromeda."

_"They can't move their ships, amigo," _said Malcho. _"At least the

ones that matter. Special ships, those are the ones they cannot move." _

"Special ships?"

"The ones that we used to banish the Reapers with," said Kedzuel. "The ones my uncle damaged before I lopped his head off. And the civil war my people had didn't help things either." He stared at some of the red-scaled Kethosians, the race called the Khazabi. These Khazabi respected him, but Kedzuel could still sense some animosity towards the Blitzardi in them. Their only reasoning to be here was to help with the defeat of the Reapers. "Just because we are an advanced species, doesn't mean we don't have social problems of our own."

"Megellan told me that the war depleted your resources," said Kiryuu.

"Much," said Kedzuel, lowering his head. "Much we used up in the Andromeda Galaxy. That's why we aren't exactly in a rush to move here. We're all out of gas."

"How did you get here?" Kiryuu asked.

_"Just like I can teleport between planets, they can teleport between galaxies," _said Malcho. _"But only themselves and their equipment. Moving a ship that way, different matter. But over the year, we've been moving one ship piece by piece. Bulkhead by bulkhead." _

"My uncle's flagship, the super carrier _Shi'lithra_, " said Kedzuel. He looked around, motioning with his talons. "I suppose it's my flagship now. You are actually inside of one of the cargo bays."

"You're uncle's ship," said Kiryuu. "Is on Earth?" He turned to Malcho, his eyes wide again. "And the UNSC doesn't know it's here?" He looked back to Kedzuel. "Does it cloak?"

"Yes," said Kedzuel. "With far more sophistication than those Covenant ships your Telek 'Heros hijacked during your war. We don't need to use heat sinks to mask our presence. The ship is always slightly out of phase with reality, neither here nor there."

"That explains why everything looks like it's made for my size," said Kiryuu. "This can't be a ship's bulkhead. It looks like granite."

"It is a substance we build our ships out of called Black Lake," said Kedzuel. "Your planet has a lot of Black Lake, actually. One of the reasons why my uncle took interest in it. He hoped you would help him mine it out. That was one of the conditions for teaching you Technomancy."

_"So now we are mining Black Lake from Earth while the ship is docked in this trans-dimensionalâ€œerâ€œhole," _said Malcho. _"This whole system has Black Lake in abundance. Enough to rebuild all their ships. We figured we would take apart each ship piece by piece, teleport them here, put them back together, mine Black Lake, forge it andâ€œreplace all the damaged parts." _

"And you couldn't do this in your galaxy?" Kiryuu asked.
"Why?"

"Black Lake had been mined out to near depletion," said Kedzuel. "We brought as much as we could mine here for smelting. We stripped planets so bare they can't even support life anymore. Fuel reserves are nearly gone. And it takes a lot to power them. We can manufacture the substance you call Life Force crystals to substitute for the depleted fuel. The problem happens to be what my uncle did to many of our files on how to do this. Khan massacred Kethosian scientists and corrupted all the files we had on how to properly rebuild the fleet and find fuel sources. When he discovered that my rebellion was winning the first civil war, he punished me by corrupting the very knowledge that I require to use as the new Emperor. That is the ability to utilize this ship into banishing King Ghidorah. I don't know how he did it. Malcho said you saw what he did, you discovered the corrupted file, so I came here to work with him. I had hoped to meet you first, Mr. Knight, but we wanted to bring the _Shi'lithra _here so that when I met you, you could transfer the knowledge to me and we could test to see if it works."

"The knowledge on how to activate this ship's ability to create that singularity that sucked King Ghidorah through and banished him?" Kiryuu began. "You think I have it?"

"You saw my uncle perform it," he said. "Something I have never seen."

Kiryuu rocked back upon the balls of his heels, running his claws through his dreads: "I don't know how he did it! I saw it, but I don't know!"

"There was audio in the file," said Kedzuel. "You heard his voice, you know his name. All Kethosian technology requires a tone, a sequence of sounds on a particular frequency to activate this ship's defenses. Those tones are passed from Emperor to Emperor. He never passed them to me because I took the throne from him. You must know what those tones are."

Kiryuu shook his head.

"This ship is dead without it," said Kedzuel.

"Those other ships," Kiryuu began. "Don't they have their own frequency?"

"It wasn't those ships that did it. It was this one. Those ships provide the power, but this ship has the mechanism."

"Only this ship?" Kiryuu asked. "Why only this ship? Why not make copies and have them do similar things?"

Kedzuel sighed, shaking his head in dismay: "Because none of us thought our people wouldâ€"become so resentful of each other after we discovered that we were meant to use Technomancy. We were expected by everyone else to be the staple of perfection for all sentient life. The Peace Keepers of the Dimensions. So, we had to keep peace within ourselves. No wars, no feuds, no fighting. Let those who were 'lesser' than us be so foolish to fight amongst themselves. We would never devolve to become such savages." Kedzuel waved his claw and

Kiryuu watched with amazement as a chair formed from the strange substance that the floor was made from, oozing up like liquid only to solidify. Kedzuel sat upon the chair and held his head in his hands. "What arrogant fools we were." He looked back to Kiryuu. "My uncle Cerenath Khan Draconis, the product of perfect breeding within the Blitzardi imperial bloodline, my father Evarus Kendal, the byproduct, the left over sludge as people called him from Khan's birth. They were twins, identical twins, they looked identical, just one was genetically better than the other. And it all went to Khan's head." Kedzuel sighed. "That's why I looked like Khan, but I'm a little bit overweight. I have a low metabolism, but physically I was stronger than Khan, strength doesn't always mean better especially in a fight with something as perfect as him. But I still beat him, only because he went mad. His perfection drove him to utter insanity and I had to put him down." He looked around at the cargo bay sadly. "But the damage was already done. And when I took the throne, I tried to fix all what he did. Just that I couldn't and we started fighting each other. The Khazabi thought that a new superior race should take hold and many grew tired of Blitzardi control. I told them that I would love to hand the throne to someone else, but knowing my race, since they are the ones who really make the decisions, I couldn't. If any of the other 'lesser' races as we Blitzardi called them, wanted to have a voice, I had to speak for them. So, the second civil war started and we devastated Andromeda and many other galaxies. It got to the point where my people were so spread out we couldn't find each other. We devolved into what you are all within my life time. Now we've been trying for the last ten thousand years to pick up what we lost."

"Ten thousand yearsâ€" "

"My people measure time much differently than you, Kiryuu," said Kedzuel, standing up. "You are only 500 years old, at least your AI is. I've been told about your bones, but those spent time sleeping for over a hundred million years. You've been sentient for 500 years. I am nearly, by your measure of time, 20 million years old. My uncle was 50 million. Megellan is 15 million." He crossed his arms. "10 thousand years is like a week to us."

Kiryuu huffed, placing a hand upon the crown of his head, shaking it in disbelief.

"That civil war that cost us everything went on for 20 thousand years, Kiryuu," said Kedzuel. "And half my species died in the struggle."

"My God!" Kiryuu said.

"Now you know why it took them so long to get here," said Malcho. "It took them so long to even lift a finger. But one thing I have to say about the Precursors, when they are in a rush, they are in a rush. The moment I was able to contact Nercine, Kedzuel stepped up to the plate. They've been waiting for us to say something to them." _

"Why couldn't they...do anything?" Kiryuu asked. "Why didn't you contact us?"

"Have you ever heard of something called celestial drift?" Kedzuel asked. "Over the course of the tens of thousands of years, the

planets, the stars, everything has changed since we last came here. Your constellations in the night sky that you see now are completely different than what we saw when we came here before hundreds of thousands of years ago. Your planet had moved since then. We had to calculate for celestial drift. Thing is though, we had nothing to work off of."

"The Array?"

_"Not everything can be answered through the Array," _said Malcho.

"You keep telling me it is!"

"When Malcho tapped into the Array," Kedzuel began. "We heard him. It takes someone in your Galaxy to contact us through the Array for us to make adjustments to our charts. We needed a point of reference to work with. Malcho was that point. You never thought to contact us because of the corrupted files the Forerunners made. They didn't want you to find us. If you found us, we would have a point of reference and we could find you."

"But Malcho was able to find you," said Kiryuu, throwing up his arms in frustration. "This makes no logical sense."

_"Some times love knows no distance, amigo," _said Malcho, a soft grin appearing on his face.

"Love?" Kiryuu asked, giving Malcho even a look of further confusion.

"Malcho was in love with my sister," said Kedzuel, smiling. He chuckled a bit.

_"I am practically a kid compared to her!" _Malcho said. He gave off a vocal laugh, sounding like a mixture of a hissing snake and the low rumble of a lion. _"She makes me feel young."_

"I have a headache," said Kiryuu. "That was nearly 80 thousand years ago, Malcho."

_"What's 80 thousand years to a Kethosian?" _Malcho asked. _"It happened like yesterday."_

"How do you get to be that old?" Kiryuu asked, looking towards Kedzuel.

"Genetic manipulation, breeding, proper diet," began Kedzuel. "The Array. Good medical plan, eugenics. We've pretty much solved most disease problems. Our ethical and moral values differ from yours. We can enter any environment that breathes oxygen-nitrogen air like we do and not suffer from possible viruses we're not immune to, because we're immune to everything."

"Earth viruses, they've changed since you've been here," said Kiryuu.

"Malcho was kind enough to provide the data we needed of every virus and bacteria known to your medical doctors," said Kedzuel. "Including mutations. The most I caught was a cold when I came here. Unpleasant,

but easy to cure. But nothing like your H.G. Wells _War of the Worlds_ where the Martian dies of simple microbic contamination. I hated the runny nose."

"Not even we can cure the common cold," said Kiryuu.

"The Array, amigo."

"It tells you one thing and then it doesn't tell you another," Kiryuu growled. "Aside from the fighting power and the convenience of shrinking, I really do hate it."

"It is because _She_ can be difficult," said Kedzuel.

Kiryuu raised a hand and took in a deep breath: "I am not going to ask because I already know who you're talking about. I've met _Her_. She's the reason why I didn't connect for two years." He looked back at Kedzuel again. "Megellan. He doesn't have your vaccines."

"He is connected to the Array," said Kedzuel. "It's great for chicken soup and NyQuil."

Kedzuel backed away and offered the chair to Kiryuu. The biomecha decided to take the kind gesture and sat himself down, leaning against the back, shaking his head over and over again. This was not making any sense to him. However, it was good enough to explain why they were here. They needed supplies, Malcho had the means to give it to them, and in tern, they will help in fighting the Reapers. King Ghidorah will meet his old foes for the first time in tens of thousands of years. Finally, Kiryuu decided to give in, sighing and looking back to Kedzuel.

"Forgive me, Your Imperial Majesty," he began. "I should have been more courteous to you when you needed our help so you could help us."

"Don't worry about it," said Kedzuel. "I kicked your ass, we're even."

"Did you ever kick my ass..." Kiryuu began. "How can you move like that?"

"I'm an Electric Dragon. Energy and magnetism and photons are my specialty. The Array enhances my abilities. And you were at a disadvantage. I knew how you fight, I've seen how you fight. But you don't know how I fight."

"You wanted to see me in action for yourself," said Kiryuu.

"I am Blitzardi, fighting is my nature," said Kedzuel. "Megellan may have told you about our socialâ€"segregation. Each race during my uncle's reign had specific duties. We Blitzardi are the warriors. Lengodos are the scientists, as well as the Auri. Khazabi were reduced to foot soldiers. I found that our races have their own special talents. A Lengodo can be just as good of a warrior as any Blitzardi can, they just use different abilities. The segregation was unfair. One of the reasons why the civil war happened after the revolution. I was taught by my uncle how to fight, Megellan taught me how to think. And in return, I taught him a little bit of fighting."

Kiryuu looked to Malcho: "So, you've stopped building my ship to build his, or rebuild his. How do I explain this to the UNSC? You secretly brought in aliens they know nothing about and you snuck a volatile weapon in as well." He shook his head. "We are both in trouble if President Mendoza finds out."

"We can pass undetected by your surveillance devices," said Kedzuel. "They won't know we're even here."

"Now will you help us?" Malcho asked.

"If it means I get my ship built faster," Kiryuu replied.

"I will do one better," said Kedzuel. "My people will build your ship."

"You can't fix your own, but you can build mine."

"With access to Black Lake and the samples of the genetic material you have provided Malcho," Kedzuel began. "We can build a ship for you. We can repair and build ships that don't do what the Shi'lithra does. The Shi'lithra is made a certain way, we can repair her drives, we can repair her navigational system and life support, with sufficient material and resources, we can repair the mechanism that Khan used to banish King Ghidorah, but we cannot operate it. That is where you come in."

Kiryuu came to his feet and took in a deep breath. He touched his temple and his eyes flashed blue, a projection of a tall, rather skinny Blitzardi dressed in armor similar to that of Kedzuel's appeared before them. Kedzuel waved a claw and the chamber they sat in suddenly vanished, replaced by an inky black void.

"Sorry, this is rather top secret," said Kedzuel. He walked around the projection, studying it. "A very good likeness of the old bastard."

"I think you two need to be reacquainted," said Kiryuu. He then spoke to the projection. "Tell me your name."

"Emperor Cerenath Khan Draconis," replied the projection.

"Even the voice is correct," said Kedzuel. "Very, very nice."

"What are you?" Kiryuu asked.

"I am Blitzardi, warrior race of the Kethosians," replied the Khan projection. "Superior to all sentient life."

"Yup, that's my uncle alright," Kedzuel said, placing his armored claws upon his hips. "The arrogant jackass he is."

Kiryuu chuckled. Malcho slithered around the projection.

"Sã-, the likeness is uncanny. You two really do look like twins. Except you're fatter, amigo."

"I'm not fat," said Kedzuel, looking around innocently. "I'm festively plump."

"Alright, I will replay the sequence I saw," said Kiryuu. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Once more, he Connected, his eyes glowing, the black marks appearing on his cheeks and the glowing cords flowing down his back. As if on queue, the blackness became a background of the familiar plating and golden glowing lights and strange golden structures and decorations that the cargo bay held, yet, more ornate. Kedzuel knew what this place was, he sat upon the bridge of the _Shi'lithra _where the ship's only pilot would reside and command the ship through the Connection. The projection of Khan now floated above, his cords connected to the walls of the ships. Before him was a holographic screen and each of them could recognize the Reaper fleet. Many of those ships, shaped like insects, cuttle fish, and all sorts of other alien forms, lined with purple lights charged for the Kethosian fleet. They fired their weapons and the three watching saw the bridge shake violently. Khan leaned down and waved his claw, commanding his ship to fire upon the Reapers. His fleet followed his example and the scene on the screen was filled with blinding lights of blue-white and red. Ships exploded and they could hear the voice of King Ghidorah scream in defiance.

"Status!" Khan called. _"Shi'luchar, _status!"

"Engine three is out, Your Majesty," replied another voice over the speakers in the bridge. "But we are holding on as best we can."

"I will not accept failure!" Khan called. "Life cannot accept failure!"

"And what are you gonna do if he does fail?" Kedzuel asked, sneering at the projection. "Execute him? You probably did. And then fornicated with his skull right afterwards."

Kiryuu's brow rose, looking back at the current Kethosian Emperor. Kedzuel shrugged.

"My uncle was...not well," he said dismissively.

_"Shi'lyemu?" _Khan said, calling out to his other ship.

"I am still alive, _Shi'lithra," _said the commander from the _Shi'lyemu._

"If you're wondering what 'shi' means," began Kedzuel. "It means 'death' in Blitzardi."

"You've named all your ships that do this specialâ€"thing with the prefix of 'death'," said Kiryuu.

"They are our most massive ships," said Kedzuel. "Each one capable of vaporizing a planet."

"And we've got one hiding here on Earth," said Kiryuu. "I feel _so_ much better about this."

_"Shut up and listen," _said Malcho.

They watched as each ship surrounded the Reaper fleet with Khan watching with a grin upon his lips. Each ship fired upon the Reapers, tearing through them with one shot where it took the fleet at the

citadel many shots to destroy one. King Ghidorah screamed again as each ship was then rendered nothing more than dust.

"I am opening the singularity," said Khan. "Divert all power to the _Shi'lithra. _Let us send these Abominations back to the hell they crawled out of."

Kedzuel stepped forward as bridge began to vibrate. He looked up at his uncle, watching him close his eyes in concentration. The elder Emperor focused his energy out towards the bow of the ship. Kedzuel's ears twitched when he started to hear a low hum coming from the walls. He could feel the tone vibrate inside his chest and he reached up to grasp it. As the tone sounded, a vast, bright white light formed at the bow of the ship, opening up to a strange landscape. Kiryuu walked to the screen, his eyes wide when he saw the strange landscape. Grey, milky white substances churned and writhed inside the rift. It was maddening and incomprehensible. Yet, he felt drawn to it.

"Don't look at it," said Kedzuel, as he turned away. "Do not look at the Far Realm."

Kiryuu turned around and so did Malcho, looking away from the screen. Kedzuel then turned to Khan, but making sure he did not look at the screen as well. His eyes widened when he saw that Khan did not look away. He stood there, staring with this maddening grin upon his face.

"The Far Realm," said Khan. "How strange it looks."

"He didn't look away?" Kedzuel asked. "Look away, you idiot! Khan! Khan, look away!"

The particles of the Reapers were slowly sucked back through the portal. Then, a golden light flowed out from the particles, and began to come through the screen itself. The wispy light caressed along Khan's face.

You cannot be rid of me so easily.

Khan still looked on, still smiling.

You will be your people's undoing...

Kiryuu's hydraulic pump froze when he heard the voice.

"King Ghidorah," he whispered.

You think that you will win as well, Kiryuu? You are just as foolish as they are.

Kedzuel turned to Kiryuu: "Shut the scene down. Shut it down now!"

Kiryuu waved his claws frantically and the scene vanished. All was left, black void. Kiryuu fell to his knees, shivering.

_"It's okay, amigo," _said Malcho as he brought his wing up over Kiryuu's shoulder. _"He's gone."_

"No, he isn't," said Kiryuu. "He's still out there."

Kedzuel walked up to both of them, his arms crossing and his head wagging. He stared blankly for a moment, trying to process what he just saw.

"I never knew why Khan became so "crazy," he began. "But this explains it. King Ghidorah possessed him. He hid it so well, he fooled us all. King Ghidorah caused the degeneration of my people's civilization. He used Khan to damage the ships he knew would be able to defeat him."

"You don't really defeat him," said Kiryuu. "You just set him back, push him back long enough for us 'lesser' sentient beings to recover from his devastation. You're a frustration for him and now he got rid of that frustration." He rose. "There must be away to truly destroy him."

"There isn't," said Kedzuel. "Not even we can destroy him."

"There must be!"

"Kiryuu, King Ghidorah is not from the Multiverse, he doesn't follow our rules. That's why we can't destroy him. However, he must take pieces of us in order to survive in our Multiverse. If he doesn't, just being here would be painful to him, as painful as if we went to the Far Realm. That's why he takes us and possesses us. But he never truly takes all of us because if he does, then he becomes more like us and less like himself. The rules that govern us, will govern him."

"Why don't we just let him take all of us?"

Kedzuel shook his head: "It will take all life in this universe to do that. And I don't want to sacrifice those lives just to make him like us." He turned to Kiryuu. "No, if we hope to defeat him, then we must find a way to enter his realm, send him back and destroy him there."

"Amigo, if any one of us goes there," _Malcho began. "We are forever changed. We cannot return because we will be Touched. We will become Abominations." _He turned to Kiryuu, cocking a brow.

"However, perhaps those who are already Touched may be able to do it." _

"What do you mean?" Kedzuel asked.

"Amigo, Kiryuu is very well at hiding his little "ailment," _said Malcho. "He is an Abomination." _

"Excuse me?" Kiryuu asked. "I'm a what?"

"King Ghidorah made you into one of his acolytes," _said Malcho. "Maybe because of that, you can go into the Far Realm and destroy King Ghidorah without being harmed." _

"King Ghidorah controlled you?" asked Kedzuel.

"For one moment," said Kiryuu. "And I've made it a habit of staying away. I feel that more I come in contact with anything that was apart

of him, scales, Flood Forms, the Reapers, I feel like he mightâ€"try and control me again. Telek 'Heros was also controlled. Twice. Even he vowed not to go near a Reaper again because of it."

"It's too risky," said Kedzuel. "Uncle Khan has faced King Ghidorah many times. No doubt he didn't look away then too. You may have been exposed, but if you limit any further exposure, you are safe. To dive into the Far Realm and attempt to destroy King Ghidorah, that reality will make you a part of it. You will cease to exist as you and you will be King Ghidorah's completely." He wagged his head. "No. I won't risk anyone who was already Touched, even for a moment, to do this convoluted plan!"

_"Then what do we do?" _asked Malcho.

"There is another way," said Kedzuel. "It requires one sacrifice. One of our own made it when we had to deal with another creature, not related to King Ghidorah, but from that horrible place. It was destroying my species. We tried everything to destroy it, even banishing it as you saw with the Reapers. It kept coming back. It only wanted us. Then, one of our own gave herself to the Array completely. She channeled the power of it...all of its power through her." He lowered his head. "She became an Aspect of the Array. An Aspect ofâ€"Takhisis herself." His eyes closed. "Only Takhisis can destroyâ€"King Ghidorah."

"The Array is thisâ€"Takhisis," said Kiryuu. "That five-headed dragon I saw. That is her. That is her name."

Kedzuel nodded: "You have to call her."

"Why does it require such power?" Kiryuu asked. "Why doesn't she come here herself? Why does she need a sacrifice?"

"She could," said Kedzuel. "She did one time. Then the incident happened. The Multiverse broke apart and it took everything she had to hold it together. That is how King Ghidorah and other creatures from the Far Realm came here. She was weakened afterwards. And we cannot exist without her. In order to save us, she had to withdraw. But through the Array, the very connection we use to channel the knowledge she has gathered over the course of 15 billion years, one person can allow themselves be possessed by her and she destroys the creature. She allows this because those monsters do not belong here. They disrupt our existence and theyâ€"agonize her. Sheâ€"can't do anything on her own because it interferes with Free Will. The reasons why we exist the way we do, why there is struggle and strife is because of Free Will. Take that awayâ€""

"Like trying to take away my freedom to choose to be who I am," said Kiryuu.

"If she comes down to fix everything," said Kedzuel. "She takes away Free Will. But in such instances like this, when it is absolutely necessary, thenâ€"she will come."

"King Ghidorah is a good reason," said Kiryuu. "Who makes the sacrifice?"

"That is for you to decide and you must live with the consequences when you do."

Kedzuel pointed up at the black voice: "There's your answer."

"Wonderful," said Kiryuu. "At least I know your name now!"

"So?"

_"I don't think she cares, amigo," _said Malcho.

"Just don't go saying it too much," said Kedzuel.

Kiryuu nodded: "I don't think people would believe me."

Kedzuel dismissed the blackness that kept what they saw secret. They found themselves now standing in the cargo bay of the _Shi'lithra._

"I now know how to activate the mechanism," he said.

"What good would it do?" Kiryuu asked. "We can't destroy him."

"No, but if we can't choose someone to sacrifice themselves to channel the full power of the Array inside of them, it's our only option."

_"It's better than nothing," _said Malcho.

"And in return, we will help in building your ship, Kiryuu," said Kedzuel. "There is one thing I must ask, though."

"Yes?" Kiryuu asked.

"When it is all over, how ever it will end, hopefully for the benefit of us," Kedzuel began. "We will still need Black Lake and other resources. I must ask your help in providing us with this if this means my people will return to your galaxy."

"I don't know if I can say we will do this for you," said Kiryuu. "That is aâ€"Citadel matter, unfortunately. As much I hate dealing with those idiots with their thumbs so far up their asses, you will need to speak to them as well as many other galactic empires who are not a part of the Citadel races."

"I understand," said Kedzuel. "I'm sure once they see us in action, they'll want to speak to us."

"Just your presence would get their attention," said Kiryuu with a smile. "And this ship! This huge shipâ€"how big is this ship?"

"Bigger than your Telek's ship," said Kedzuel. "She's over 89 kilometers long."

"As big as a small moon," said Kiryuu. "You will knock the Turians off their high chairs when it comes to dreadnaught status."

"Our regular warships are over 20 kilometers long," said Kedzuel.

"I suppose it's necessary to fit people as big as us," said Kiryuu.

Kedzuel laughed.

"Make my ship big enough to fit me in my true size," said Kiryuu.
"With room to spare."

_"What about the dreadnaught numbers?" _Malcho asked. _"Earth has used up its quota because of the stolen Covenant ships Telek gave us."_

Kiryuu smiled at Malcho, leaning over to place a claw upon his feathery shoulder.

"In the words my mentor once said to me," he began. "Fuck the Citadel."

Again, Malcho let loose a hiss and a growl, a dragon's way of laughing when he heard that statement.

"Exactly, Kiryuu!"

"The People of Erde-Tyrene should never have such regulations upon them," said Kedzuel. "You will never be able to properly take up the Mantle of Protection we gave you if you are limited in your armada size." He scratched his nose. "Something I must discuss with this Citadel Council."

"An uproar that will make," said Kiryuu. "But right now, I really don't care anymore." His grin widened. "For the first time in seven years, I really don't care what those morons think. I don't care. They can just go dive into a quasar for all I care." He looked around. "Does this place dispense drinks?"

"Of course it does," said Kedzuel. He motioned them to follow him as he came to a wall. Touching the surface of the wall, several designs began to glow golden upon his touch. He looked back to the others. "What do you want to drink?"

"Does it make Earth drinks?"

"I've reviewed the lists of beverages you have here," said Kedzuel. "We've been here for a year now, and I have had time to venture out and try all sorts of your drinks. What do you like?"

"Telek loves whiskey," said Kiryuu. "And vodka, and sometimes together. Why not that?"

"Zu'ichu, wisuki no voduku," said Kedzuel, speaking in his native tongue.

"I must learn your language," said Kiryuu.

"I can give you the language protocols and the alphabet for you to study," said the Emperor.

"Thank you, Your Majesty."

"Call me Kedzuel."

As the machine dropped three glasses into a glowing depression in the wall, filling them up with the clear liquid of whiskey and vodka. Kiryuu turned to Malcho.

"There was something else I needed to speak to you about," he began. "I just got the report back from my intel on Shepard's ship. They discovered King Ghidorah was trying to make a human Reaper."

_"Ay caramba," _said Malcho, not one bit pleased by the news. His feathers ruffled and he gave them a hearty shake. _"I hope she destroyed it."_

"I do believe she intends to," said Kiryuu. "But I hear the Illusive Man is wanting to save parts of it."

"He is a stupid moron to think he could use any bit of King Ghidorah, his Reapers, his Flood, anything to Cerberus' advantage!"

Kedzuel pulled the glasses and from the dispenser and handed two of them to Malcho and Kiryuu.

"Malcho told me about Cerberus as well," he said. "Your government created them and now they are turning against you."

"I may have had some hand in their creation," said Kiryuu. "But everything else is all them. And the Illusive Man, whoever he is. The Array can't tell me either."

"The Array doesn't always hand you answers," said Kedzuel. "Because She knows you will find out another way."

"Compliance," said Kiryuu.

"These Cerberus agents, if they try to use Reaper technology, they are no better than what the Usurpers attempted with the Flood," said Kedzuel. "I hope your Commander Shepard will make the right decision."

"She will," said Kiryuu. He shook his head, looking at Malcho. "But what Cerberus didâ€"using G-Cells. We have the proof. We can expose them."

_"They cover their tracks too well," _said Malcho. _"Amigo. Let's worry about the Reapers, then we'll stick it to Cerberus when the Reapers are gone."_

Kiryuu took in a deep breath and finally nodding in agreement. Things looked a little brighter and at last he finally felt he could see the light at the end of the tunnel. Kedzuel held up his drink and Kiryuu clanked it. Malcho reached up and his glass met theirs with a clank. Then, they drank. Kiryuu smiled, looking around at the alien chamber that was the cargo bay of Kedzuel's ship. Kedzuel placed the glass in the dispenser and it suddenly disappeared. Kiryuu and Malcho did the same.

"For now, I think it is best we do not say much about what we are doing down here," said Kedzuel. "I would hate for your government to kick us out before we are finished."

"I agree," said Kiryuu.

"Sã-, " _nodded Malcho.

"Would you like to see the bridge, Kiryuu?" Kedzuel asked.

Kiryuu looked around again and nodded: "After seeing this ship in my dreams, the bridge in my nightmaresâ€"why not see it in reality?"

"I assure you no monsters will come out and scream 'boo'," said Kedzuel with a chuckle. Once more, he motioned them to follow and yelled at his workers to continue the repairs. As they came to a far wall, the doors opening up to allow them to enter down a corridor, Kiryuu once more felt hopeful. Now, he felt the playing field King Ghidorah was setting up now became even. He grinned even more. Wait till Alan sees this.

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Upon the Firefly class ship _Serenity _the mood was somber. After loosing a dear friend, the crew and their guests kept to themselves. Megellan laid upon his bed, his arms folded behind his head. He was dressed in his science uniform again and he looked upon the soft glow of the light overhead. His glowing blue eyes lit up and a smile spread across his face. Rising from his bed, he opened up the steal door with a swish and began to make his way to down to the cargo bay and out the doors. He watched as Telek had ushered off Dr. Halsey, apparently the Supreme Commander wanted to speak to her secretly. Megellan continued to grin and settled down upon a crate.

"Captain," he began.

"What?" Alan asked, turning to the newest member of his crew. He saw the curious smile upon his face, the hopeful look upon his glowing blue eyes.

Megellan flipped his black hair and the Connection Cords whipped about behind him.

"I have excellent news," he said. "Something that might help."

"What could help?" Alan asked. "Why do you have that smile on your face?"

"Captain, I wish to inform you that you may not have to worry about going to the Andromeda Galaxy to find my people."

"What?" Alan asked, his grief stricken face soon faded to utter confusion. "What do you mean?"

"His Imperial Majesty sends his salutations, Captain Tyler," said Megellan. "Kedzuel is not on Kethoi. He is on Erde-Tyrene and he has brought his ship with him."

"You told me your people were having difficultiesâ€" "

"Difficulties, yes, but we have made progress since I've last seen them," he replied. "Much progress. However, still repairs continue and we have gone to Earth for certain resources that planets like

Earth possess. We are, under the nose of your government, currently mining for Black Lake, the material we use to build our ships. It is an illegal practice, but necessary if you wish for us to assist in helping you fight the Reapers." He ran a green claw through his black mane. "Normally we ask a planet with sentient life if we could mine for Black Lake. Or we do not mine planets with sentient life. Mining for Black Lake is devastating to the ecology, but I do believe Kedzuel is being very careful in what he does so not to damage your homeworld. After all, it is only the _Shi'lithra _that he is mining Black Lake for." He rose from the crate and walked out in front, folding his hands behind his back. "Kiryyu seems optimistic. He suggests that we should appear before this Citadel Council you think so highly of and finally announce our return. However, I do suggest for now until Black Lake has been sufficiently mined for the repairs of the _Shi'lithra _that we keep this to ourselves. It would hardly be fruitful if all of a sudden the People of Erde-Tyrene be crossed with us for taking that which does not belong to us without permission, despite lacking the knowledge of how to use such a rich and valuable resource. But perhaps when this war is over, we can discuss with this Citadel Council of planets uninhabited in which we can mine for Black Lake. And of course we will be happy to give to the People of Erde-Tyrene knowledge to use Black Lake to its full potential."

"How did your emperor get to Earth?" Alan asked, trying to even fathom how it all came about.

"Though we cannot travel by ship to your galaxy, through the help of Malcho, we were able to teleport ourselves and the _Shi'lithra _piece by piece to your planet," he replied.

"Your people teleported a ship onto Earth without them knowing about it?"

"Yes," said Megellan.

"How?"

"It would take too long to explain," said Megellan. "Just know it is there. That is important. We are moving other ships too within your system, all close to a significant source of Black Lake. Do not worry, they are on natural satellites orbiting the planets you call the Ice Queens, Neptune and Uranus. Those moons have significant Black Lake deposits." He smiled. "They always had and it has not changed since we last were there. Our geologists were most pleased."

"Tell me, mate," said Alan, feeling a knot building in his throat. "How long were the Precursors in the Sol System?"

"One year, 32 weeks, and 13 days," said Megellan.

Alan lowered his head into his hands, gripping the brown strands tightly.

"How long has Kiryyu known?"

"Just today," said Megellan. "Malcho on the other hand has been helping them for that long. Malcho has never told Kiryyu until now that he was helping Kedzuel."

"Malcho was hiding something from Kiryuu?"

"I told you that if Kedzuel was contacting Malcho, then it means he was involved," said Megellan. "Now, I know what he was doing. This is great news." He leaned down to the Changeling. "It means we have a chance."

"Weâ€"have a chance."

"I wouldn't go telling anyone just yet of the good news," began Megellan. "Especially to the Supreme Commander. Telek 'Heros may inform his UNSC of what Malcho is doing and this could halt their progress."

"Right," said Alan, taking a deep breath. "How soon do you think they will be done?"

"Difficult to say," said Megellan. "But very soon. A few months. It will take King Ghidorah's Reapers to come your area of the galaxy in a year and a half, if not more. By that time, the repairs to the _Shi-class Juggernauts _will be completed. And my people's mighty armada will come to help."

Megellan finally gave a harty pat to Alan's back and strode around the huge bay of the _Shadow of Darkness. _Alan watched as the Precursor walked around, looking at the detailing of the ship and periodically commenting on its architecture and design. This news, he did not know what exactly to think, but for now, it seemed like pretty good news despite all that had happened today. He had to agree with Megellan, for now, he would keep this information a secret until Kiryuu Knight spoke to him about it.

End
file.